

## Message Text

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46

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 181208Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2431

C O N F I D E N T I A L TRIPOLI 0925

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MILI

SUBJECT: MFA REACTION TO NORTHROP-PAGE REVERSAL

REF: STATE 195216

1. CHARGE AND POLOFF TALKED AUGUST 18 WITH AMBASSADOR SHAABAN, DIRECTOR OF NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS AT MFA, AND CONVEYED U.S. POSITION ON NORTHROP-PAGE CONTRACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH INSTRUCTIONS IN REFTEL.

2. IN REPLY, SHAABAN SAID IT APPEARED THAT EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WERE ONE-SIDED, AND THAT THE MORE LIBYA DID TO IMPROVE RELATIONS, THE MORE THE U.S. REBUFFED LIBYA'S ADVANCES. SHAABAN SAID THAT WHEN COUNTRY OFFICER JAMESON WAS HERE HE HAD BEEN TREATED WITH SPECIAL CONSIDERATION, THE MINISTRY HAD ORGANIZED A PROGRAM FOR HIS VISIT, AND HE HAD BEEN TAKEN TO MEET THE MINISTRY'S ACTING UNDERSECRETARY AT THE TIME, AL-ATRASH. THIS WAS ALL EVIDENCE OF LIBYA'S KEEN DESIRE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS. SHAABAN SAID HE HAD HOPED THAT THERE WOULD BE SOME POSITIVE RESPONSE TO THIS FROM THE U.S., BUT INSTEAD THE OPPOSITE HAD HAPPENED, AND WITH THE NORTHROP-PAGE REVERSAL A NEW OBSTACLE HAD BEEN PLACED IN THE PATH OF AN IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS. SHAABAN POINTED OUT THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO RESPONSE TO LIBYA'S NOMINATION OF AN AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S., AND NO RECIPROCAL STEP TO LIBYA'S REMOVAL OF RESTRICTIONS ON THE SIZE OF EMBASSY TRIPOLI. IT WAS BEGINNING TO APPEAR TO HIM THAT THE U.S. DID NOT

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SHARE LIBYA'S DESIRE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS. AND WHAT ABOUT

THE C-130'S?

3. IN RESPONSE, CHARGE REAFFIRMED OUR READINESS TO CONTINUE AND EXPAND CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS. IT WAS ONLY IN THE MILITARY SPHERE THAT WE FELT WE COULD NOT COOPERATE, AS A RESULT OF LIBYA'S ACTIVE OPPOSITION TO OUR MIDEAST PEACE EFFORTS.

4. SHAABAN REPLIED THAT AS THE U.S. WAS ALWAYS SAYING, OUR OVERALL RELATIONS WERE THE IMPORTANT THING. CULTURAL AND COMMERCIAL RELATIONS WERE VERY WELL, AND LIBYA WELCOMED THEM, BUT THEY WERE NOT ENOUGH IF THEY WERE NOT ACCOMPANIED BY STRONG POLITICAL TIES. WE SURELY KNEW WHAT IMPORTANCE LIBYA ATTACHED TO ITS ARMY. IN THE ABSENCE OF AN IMPROVEMENT IN OFFICIAL RELATIONS, COMMERCIAL AND CULTURAL TIES MIGHT SUFFER. THE WORLD WAS A BIG PLACE, LIBYA HAD GOOD RELATIONS WITH FRANCE, THE USSR, AND OTHER COUNTRIES. LIBYAN STUDENTS COULD BE EDUCATED ELSEWHERE, AND LIBYA COULD SATISFY ITS COMMERCIAL REQUIREMENTS ELSEWHERE IF NECESSARY. WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT LIBYA'S DESIRE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WAS SINCERE. IT WAS NOT JUST TALK. LIBYA KNEW THERE WERE MANY PROBLEMS, AND THAT THE ROAD WOULD BE LONG, BUT HAD HOPED TO SEE SOME CONCRETE ACTIONS FROM THE U.S. WHICH WOULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO KEEP MOVING. IF THE U.S. WERE SERIOUS ABOUT IMPROVING RELATIONS, THE DEPT WOULD DO WELL TO RECONSIDER ITS DECISION ON NORTHROP-PAGE. HAD WE NOT NOTICED THAT THE PRESS HAD BEEN MORE RESTRAINED IN ITS TREATMENT OF THE U.S. LATELY, AND IN PARTICULAR THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO REFERENCE TO THE MIDEAST NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE LAST WEEK?

5. WE ASKED WHETHER WE WOULD BE MISLEADING OUR GOVT IF WE REPORTED THAT THE HALT OF PROPAGANDA ATTACKS ON PRESIDENT SADAT DURING THE LAST WEEK HAD BEEN CONNECTED WITH LIBYA'S DESIRE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., EMPHASIZING THAT THIS POINT WAS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE. AFTER SOME ATTEMPT TO AVOID A DIRECT ANSWER, SHAABAN ADMITTED THAT HE COULD NOT SAY FOR CERTAIN WHAT THE CAUSE OF THE STOPPING OF THE ANTI-SADAT/CAMPAIGN HAD BEEN. PERHAPS THE RCC HAD GIVEN AN UNOFFICIAL DIRECTIVE TO THIS EFFECT. SOMETIMES THIS HAPPENED WHEN THERE WERE SENSITIVE DIPLOMATIC CONVERSTATIONS TAKING CONFIDENTIAL

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PLACE. IN ANY CASE, WE COULD BE SURE THAT IF LIBYAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS IMPROVED, THE PRESS WOULD NOT RPT NOT BE A PROBLEM. THE PRESS SOMETIMES MADE MISTAKES, AND SAID ONE THING WHEN IT MEANT ANOTHER, BUT IT COULD BE CONTROLLED, AND IT WOULD NATURALLY REFLECT THE LEVEL OF RELATIONS IN ITS COMMENTARIES.  
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